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Dec 53  
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China

Chinese vs Western Culture and Civilization/Chinese  
Philosophy and Scientific Method/Deterrents to Progress  
in Science and Technology

Taipei

Jun 52 - Jun 53

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1. Q. Why did China apparently lose its ideas of progress after the period of contending states? What elements of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are significant to the understanding of this situation? What philosophical ideas or traditional culture elements have tended to attenuate interest in the systematic study of nature? What are the main factors contributing to Chinese failure to develop Western scientific attitudes after their introduction in the 19th and 19th centuries?

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- A. a) The answer to the first is that China never had an idea of progress as we understand the term. And the elements in the Chinese cultural tradition that make it possible to understand this fact are not the social, moral or political doctrines that we have tended almost exclusively to study. The elements that make it possible to understand what appears to us as the static nature of Chinese society are the answers that the Chinese gave to certain fundamental questions about the nature of reality itself. The difference lies in the answers they gave to such questions as: "What is Being?" What is the source of the observed order and animation in the World? What is the nature of time? What is the nature of Space? What is ultimately real? Is the ultimate reality composed of matter or is it form or is it a combination of these? Is it sensed or is it known only by postulating its existence and checking against deductions made of what would be necessary if a postulated entity is as it is postulated to be? What are the categories used to grasp the innumerable facts that come to the senses? And what is the goal of the system of thought?"

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- b) the root differences between Chinese and Western civilization and culture are not due simply to different external environment or to different internal environments in the sense of different biological, neurological or constitutional factors. The difference is due instead to

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to differences given to the fundamental questions asked above.

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- c) The world of sense data is of course the first world of which Man is aware. The first question which he faces, therefore, is: What is the source of the animation and order observed to be present in the sensed world? In the Greek foundations of Western civilization the following answer was given to that question. The animating and ordering principle or force is possessed by certain forceful, resourceful men. No doubt certain factors in their external environment directed their attention to this possibility, but the statement is a conclusion based on the examination of such factual evidence as was available to them, and was not a necessary conditioning of their minds in the sense that no other conclusion was possible. However, no other conclusion may have been reasonable under their experience as of that date. That is, perhaps to the extent they were seagoing they observed the necessity of having one man direct the enterprise in order that chaos should not imperil the whole crew. In China the answer to that question - What is the source of the animation and order observed to be present in the sense world? - was the following: The source is certain occasions when and sites where the sensed social solidarity or Oneness, the emotional experience of jen is experienced (fetes, hierogamies, jousts, etc).

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The chain of reasoning beginning with the Chinese answer does not require that one should ever posit any other world than the sense world. With the Chinese answer no contradictions arise that require the exploration of other possibilities. That is, no contradictions arose until the impact of the Western World showed China that her fundamental view of reality must not be as comprehensive as it had previously seemed because here were societies founded on different knowledge that proved to be more powerful and capable of producing the needs of their citizens more fully than the assumptions of Chinese civilizations [redacted] until one hundred years ago no contradictions or difficulties had arisen to cause the Chinese to re-examine their fundamental assumptions.

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e)

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The second question that early Man would have to face would be: What is the nature, not the source, but the nature of the animation and order that is observed in the sense world and the nature of whatever it is that is animated and ordered? In the Greek foundations of Western thought, one of the answers was that the real is stuff, that is, that it is material. Another answer was that the real is number. In China the answer was that the real is social.

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The next fundamental question in the normal chain of reasoning would be, Is the Real one or many? Now in both civilizations the same answer was given - that the Real is a sensed One. But, the next answer divides China and Western civilization. Then the question is, is it divided or undivided? And our answer was that it is divided. This answer is required by the anthropomorphic interpretation of the source. That is, if the source of the animation and order is particular men then the animation and order must be divided up because it springs from a number of different sources. Now in China the answer was given that this sensed One which constitutes reality is undivided. This answer was possible because the most vital ultimate features of observed reality were not believed to be divided among certain men but were to be found in Time and Space whenever and wherever the emotional experience of Oneness occurred through the union of men and women in procreation or simply common activity. Because of this answer Chinese thought was never faced with the contradictions that drove the Greeks to postulate a Real world existing beyond and behind the Sensed world.

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f) The chain of these contradictions in Greek thought is briefly as follows - Being a One and being divided, it must be capable of being divided infinitely. But Zeno's paradox shows this to be impossible since if the points have extension an infinite number could never be contained in a finite line, and if they do not have extension an infinite number would never compose a line at all. Therefore because of this contradiction the Real as a material sensed One infinitely divided was given up and it was said that the Real was a material sensed many. Thus, we had indivisibles with magnitude. But the discovery of incommensurable magnitudes, i.e., that the hypotenuses of certain right triangles could not be composed of a whole number contradicted the theory that the Real is a sensed material many. To avoid this contradiction, Democritus distinguished between the Real world and the Sensed world, putting the incommensurability in the Sensed world. The postulation of a Real world beyond the Sensed world is, of course, an important feature of modern science. 25X1X6 jump a few steps and give the conception of ultimate reality that can be seen in the theories of three Greek thinkers and in the conceptions underlying Confucian ethics. In the physical theory of Democritus ultimate reality was small bits of matter that have motion in the Real world, that have being and are timeless. These compose everything else by falling together accidentally in certain ways. In the mathematical theory of Plato ultimate reality is ratio (logos). All forms of all things spring from certain ultimate ratios which have being and are in the Real world. In the functional theory of Aristotle ultimate reality is form. The forms of all things are in the Sensed world logically but not actually, i.e., they are present potentially and are the final causes that Sensed phenomena are in the process of becoming. But in Chinese science ultimate reality was taken to be a Sensed Oneness or Unity which includes the ordered totality of immediately observed phenomena. There is no entity smaller than the whole universe which is a Sensed One and undivided. (This is possible because the animation and order was not given an anthropomorphic interpretation in China.)

- g) Once this difference in the conception of what is Real has occurred there is a corresponding fundamental difference in scientific method. 25X1X6 state for each of the theories just above what the scientific method is. In the physical theory of Democritus scientific method would consist of postulation of ultimate real particles in a Real world to avoid the difficulty of incommensurable magnitudes and to explain all animation order and all Sense phenomena - all reality - in terms of the motion and combination of these atomic particles. (With logical deduction from the postulates and confirmation by checking against observed facts in the Sensed world.) In the mathematical theory of Plato scientific method becomes postulation of mathematical and of ultimate ratios. To solve the problem raised by incommensurable magnitudes and to explain all animation, order and sense phenomena in terms of ratio (logos) imposing itself upon raw matter and forming and ordering and animating everything - all reality. (With logical deduction from the postulates and confirmation by checking against observed facts in the sense world.) In the functional theory of Aristotle scientific method becomes observation, description and classification of Sensed phenomena according to what characteristics the phenomena possess. (Defining by genera, species and difference) and what they will become. (Postulation is involved in the theory of final causes.) In the scientific theory underlying Confucian ethics scientific method is observation, description and classification of sense phenomena in terms not of what they are or of what they will become but in terms of what they do. (A tree stands upright and gives shade. If it does not stand upright and give shade it is not a tree. A son is not a son unless he acts toward his father as a son should act, etc.) Observation, description and classification not of characteristics of Sensed phenomena but of Sensed phenomena as characteristics of the whole entity - the Sensed Oneness of the undivided universe. Man counts as One Sensed phenomena the same as a mountain, a river, a fish or a bird except that he is able to know the true order of all things and when he knows it to help to realize it by making it evident to other creatures.
- h) The Chinese accepted the world as it appeared and only attempted to discover the intrinsic harmonies in the world and to maintain harmony by seeing that every creature and thing found its place and kept its place so that the harmony might be

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maintained. With the birth of Greek science the Western world embarked on a project of going behind the world of appearances to an ultimate Real mathematical world postulated to exist behind and give rise to the world of appearance. This led to a control over the world of appearance so that men could constitute the kind of a world they wanted to live in, make it fit their desires and opinions and consequently constitute a social order of their own making and constitute governments to maintain that social order. This is the root of Constitutional Law. It is the same root as physical science and as our emphasis upon power. Because here the goal is not simply to discover the proper order and to attain it in order to achieve harmony. Here the goal is to gain power by control over our environment and including other men in it, then to justly share that power and justly share the tasks of creating the power and the products of the use of that power in order that the final goal shall be justice.

- 1) Thus the Chinese were constitutionally unable to understand what we meant by progress or what we meant by scientific method. They were constitutionally unable because the focus of their mental eye was different from the focus of our eye so that when the same things were before us we each saw something different.

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2. Q. What cultural factors (including philosophical) remain today as probably strong deterrents to progress in science and technology?

- A. The cultural factors arising from the fundamental differences set out above are so thoroughly a part of every facet of Chinese life that it is a tremendous wrench for a Chinese to even conceive of what a Westerner is talking about when he speaks of the scientific method. This difficulty is heightened by the nature of the Chinese language which has never departed from being an essentially pictographic one. It does not have logical structure.

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3. Q. What cultural factors might account for Western trained Chinese scientists failing to continue productive work after returning to China with a good record of achievement abroad under Western guidance and inspiration?

- A. The cultural factors that account for Western trained Chinese scientists failing to continue productive work after returning to China even though they had a good record of achievement abroad under Western guidance and inspiration are seen in the answer to question "2" above. It is too completely frustrating for even a Chinese who has seen this fundamental difference to try to show it to the other Chinese around him. He meets with absolutely no perception of what he is talking about and pretty soon he just gives up. Specifically of the experience of Chiang Wenlin that he related to me. When he went back to China he tried to point out this fundamental difference to his colleagues in Peking University where for a great number of years he was chancellor. He just got tired of being laughed at. They didn't see it and he met with no support in his effort to try to make them see it, so it just got to be too much of a burden for him to try to get them to see it so he went along with Chinese ways.

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4. [Available on loan from CIA Library is a copy of the outline noted in paragraph 1-1 above.]

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